

# Brookline Preservation Commission

## Demolition Application Report

Address: 39 Cottage Street  
Applicant: Warren Cottage Ventures LLC  
Building Type: House (Full)  
National Register Listing (if Applicable): Green Hill NRD



### Historical/Architectural Significance:

The residence at 39 Cottage Street was designed by Deck House, Inc., constructed in 1971 by builder Peter Morton for Dr. Frederic Hoppin and his wife Caroline. The parcel, vacant at the time, was difficult to build on due to the ledge preventing a septic system from being installed. The Hoppins were able to negotiate with a neighbor for rights to put a drainage field on a sliver of adjacent land. The Hoppin family occupied this home from 1971 to 2012, raising their 3 children in the home. Fred and Caroline Hoppin were very involved in efforts to save the neighboring house at 25 Cottage Street, the home of HH Richardson. The details of this will be included in the upcoming case report for 25 Cottage Street. In 2012 the home was sold to Mordechai Levin, former owner of 25 Cottage Street and 222 Warren Street. The house has been vacant since that time.

Deck House, INC., a prefabricated housing company, was founded in 1959 by William Berkes and Robert Brownell. Both Berkes and Brownell worked for Carl Koch at Techbuilt and Acorn Structures, INC., two of Koch's most successful prefabricated housing ventures, before leaving Acorn Structures to pursue their own vision. Carl Koch, a professor of Architecture at MIT from 1946-1966, was known as a leader in the movement toward prefabricated housing in the late 1940's. His aesthetic was shaped by studying under Walter Gropius at Harvard and working abroad in Sweden. Koch was one of the earliest proponents of adaptable living spaces and a lifelong champion of affordable housing. Acorn Structures, INC. was founded in 1947 and began by creating affordable prefabricated homes from military surplus materials. The work of Deck House, INC. clearly follows the vision of Koch, creating homes in the modernist tradition characterized by simple, clean lines, adaptable interior spaces in an affordable, prefabricated package. Deck House designs utilize post and beam construction emphasizing the beauty of the exposed Douglass Fir frames. Beams are placed 8' on center and ceilings are constructed of structural tongue and groove decking laid over the frame. This technique

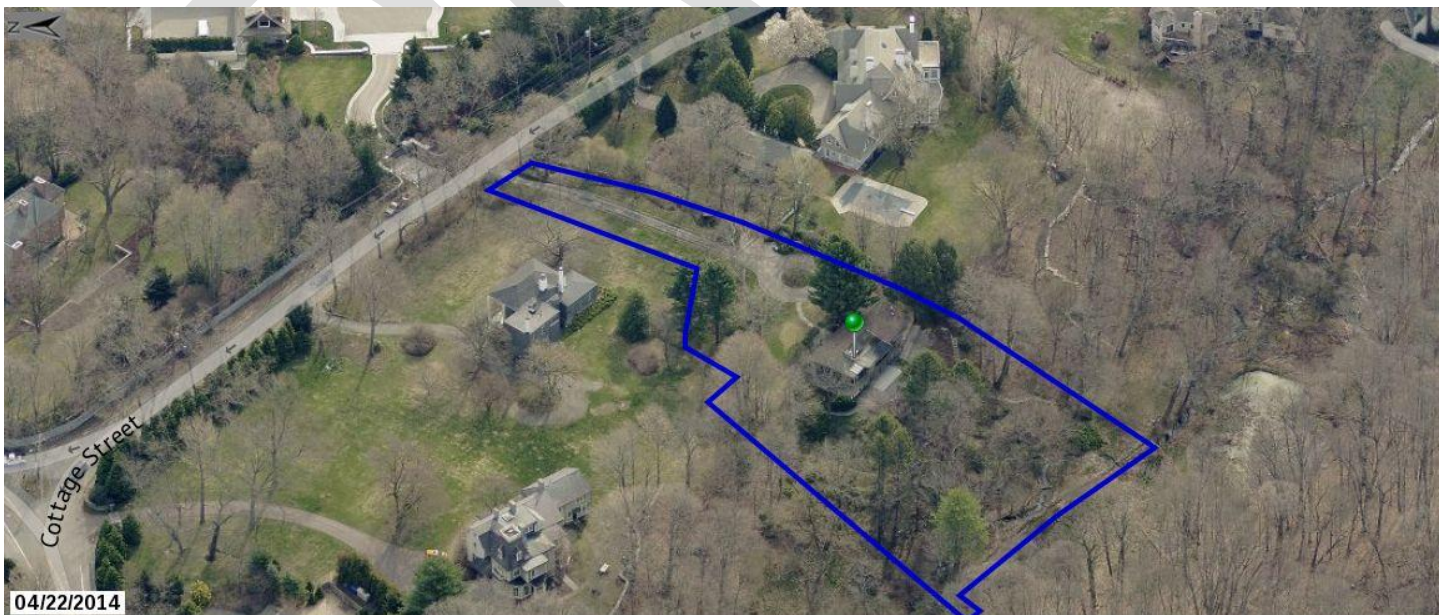
leaves the framing exposed and reduces the structural need for interior supports, creating open, flexible living spaces of warm, natural materials. Typically, gables of glass further express the structure's frame while south elevations open to decks or terraces through sliding glass doors. This style of building originated on the West Coast; the Deck House successfully adapted and introduced it to the East Coast. There were over 20,000 Deck Houses built primarily in Massachusetts and North Carolina from 1959 to 1995 when the company merged with its founders' former colleagues at Acorn Structures. The new company operated for several years under the Deck House name, producing the designs of both companies. Receivership followed an unsuccessful name-change in 2005; in 2008 Trudeau Homes International bought the company and renamed it the Acorn Deck House Co. This company is still in business today and continues to support owners of Deck Homes by manufacturing replacement parts including custom doors and windows for the homes.

The Contemporary style home reads as a single-story dwelling from the front, its 2 story construction invisible save for the narrow ribbon of clerestory windows at grade beneath the overhanging 2<sup>nd</sup> story that give the building the illusion of floating. The low pitched gable roof, widely overhanging eaves, exposed roof beams, natural materials, gable window walls and recessed entry are hallmarks of the style. The design follows the format of the Deck House with exposed beams, tongue & groove deck ceiling and an open main living space with sliding glass doors to the south facing deck and terrace to the rear. Changes to the home include the replacement of one window and a four foot extension to the south dining room wall to create a sunroom space; both of these were completed by the Hoppin family. Sometime after 2012 when the house was sold to Mr. Levin the majority of the interior finishes were stripped out.

The house at 39 Cottage Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

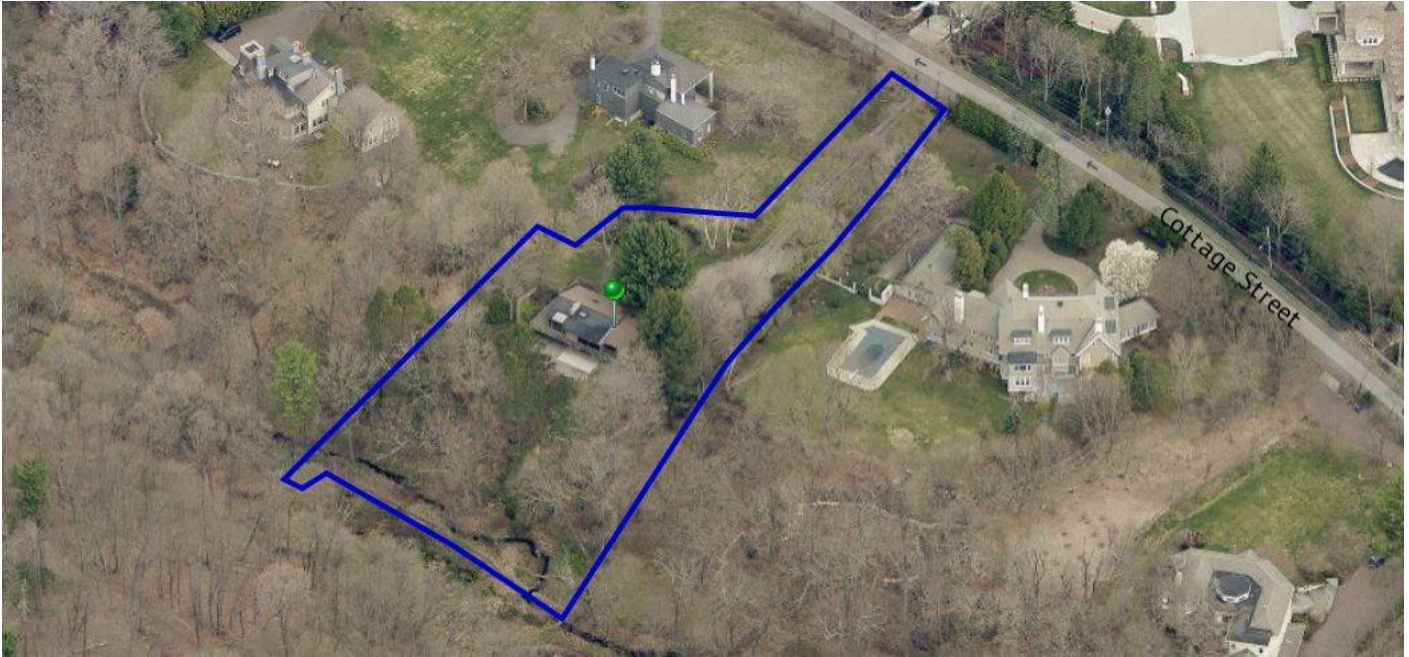
- b. The building is listed on or is within an area listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places; is eligible for listing on the National or State Registers of historic places; or is a building for which a preliminary determination of eligibility has been made by the Massachusetts Historical Commission;
- c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the town or Commonwealth; and
- d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The building at 39 Cottage Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, and workmanship.



Aerial view of 39 Cottage Street, looking east.





Aerial view of 39 Cottage Street, looking north.



14

Aerial view of 39 Cottage Street, looking west.





Aerial view of 39 Cottage Street, looking south.



Façade, 39 Cottage Street





39 Cottage Street, west elevation







39 Cottage Street, rear (south) elevation overlooking ravine.







View to  
ravine  
provided by  
Fred  
Hoppin  
(top)

West  
elevation  
(bottom)







Interior views







View of sunroom





View of 25 Cottage from the driveway of 39 Cottage